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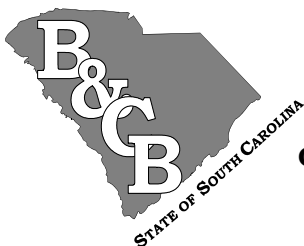
Red Cross Courses Reflect New Emergency CPR Guidelines

More than 250,000 Americans die each year of sudden cardiac arrest, but the American Heart Association (AHA) estimates that many of them could be saved by quickly calling 911, initiating cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), using an automated external defibrillator (AED) when available and fast follow-up by advanced medical personnel. To make the process even easier for people who lack formal medical training and to save more lives the AHA recently revamped their CPR guidelines with specific adaptations for lay rescuers. Updates like these will soon be reflected in American Red Cross health and safety programs. Each year, the Red Cross trains more than five million people in adult, infant and child, and professional rescuer CPR and nearly 12 million in health and safety related education.

The 2000 edition offers streamlining and simplification, including the recommendation that lay rescuers administering CPR not rely on checking the victim's carotid pulse to determine if chest compressions are necessary. Instead, the recommendation is to check for other signs of circulation, including coughing, movement and normal breathing.

If it is determined that the victim's heart is not beating, the revamped guidelines instruct people to proceed with chest compressions and rescue breathing, but at a different rate than had previously been recommended. The new guidelines specifically call for 100 compressions a minute. The new CPR guidelines are also applicable for unconscious adult choking victims. Under the older guidelines, lay rescuers were supposed to try to clean a choking victim's airway using blind fingers sweep and attempt the Heimlich Maneuver before proceeding with chest compression and rescue breathing. The new guidelines advise that rescuers begin CPR immediately upon determination that the victim is unconscious. Neither finger sweeps nor abdominal thrusts are recommended by the AHA's new guidelines for lay rescuers. According to AHA officials, the pressure on the chest should dislodge whatever object is obstructing the airway.

Other changes to the CPR guidelines reflect changes in medical technology. The increasing availability of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public settings has also influenced the new AHA guidelines. AEDs are fairly inexpensive and easy for lay rescuers to use. The device automatically senses the heart rhythm and determines whether a lifesaving electric shock is necessary. If a shock is necessary, the AED prompts the rescuer to press the "shock" button on the device. The AED needs no calibration or adjustment, everything is automatically detected.



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South Carolina State Budget and Control Board
Office of Insurance Services-Insurance Benefits Management
October 2000

